

Journal of the Royal Society of Arts

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VOL. CI

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, 31ST DECEMBER, AT 2.30 p.m. DR. MANN JUVENILE LECTURE. "Birds", by Lieutenant-Colonel David Wolfe-Murray ("Fish-hawk"). (Admission by special ticket only.)

FRIDAY, 2ND JANUARY, AT 2.30 p.m. DR. MANN JUVENILE LECTURE. "Photography", by D. A. Spencer, Ph.D., D.I.C., F.R.I.C., Hon.F.R.P.S., Past President, Royal Photographic Society. (Admission by special ticket only.)

MONDAY, 5TH JANUARY, AT 6.30 p.m. FILM EVENING. (See notice below.)

THURSDAY, 8TH JANUARY, AT 6.15 p.m. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECTION. (See notice below.)

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECTION

A special meeting of the Commonwealth Section has been arranged for Thursday, 8th January, 1953, to give Fellows an opportunity to meet the Right Hon. Sir Godfrey Huggins, C.H., K.C.M.G., Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, and to hear a talk by him on developments in that country. Sir Godfrey, who is a Fellow of the Society, is visiting this country in connection with the Commonwealth Economic Conference. Light refreshments will be available at the beginning of the meeting, which will be informal in character, from 5.45 p.m., and the talk will be given at 6.15 p.m.

JUVENILE LECTURES

A few tickets, for which immediate application should, of course, be made, are still available for each of the Juvenile Lectures notified above. Both lectures will be of particular interest, as "Fish-hawk" will be illustrating his talk with lightning sketches and Dr. Spencer's lecture will be accompanied by a number of fascinating demonstrations.

Each ticket will admit one adult and two children.

FILM EVENING

The second Film Evening of the Session will be held on Monday, 5th January, at 6.30 p.m. The programme consists of the following films: *Rig 20*, *We've Come a Long Way*, *Epaves*, *The White Continent*, and *London to Brighton in Four Minutes*. The keynote of most of these films is adventure, and they have been chosen with a view to the possibility that some Fellows may desire to bring their older children on this occasion.

Fellows are entitled to introduce two guests, and light refreshments will be served in the Library beforehand, from 5.45 p.m., at a charge of 1s. per head.

Rig 20 (15 minutes) is the exciting and dramatic story, filmed by the cameraman of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, of the first fire to occur in connection with the drilling of the Company's oilwells in Persia, and how, at great peril, it was extinguished. The film was awarded a first prize at the 1952 Venice Film Festival.

We've Come a Long Way (10 minutes) is a Technicolor cartoon showing the development of oil-carrying ships from the sailing brig of 1861 to a modern 28,000-ton tanker. It was produced by Halas & Batchelor for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and won an award at the 1951 Venice Film Festival.

Epaves (20 minutes) is a weird and fascinating French film produced by Jean Cousteau. It was filmed in the Mediterranean by frogmen carrying a special ciné-camera and shows underwater exploration of hulks lying on the sea-bottom. It also introduces the new popular sport of underwater harpoon fishing. The copy to be shown has an English commentary.

The White Continent (20 minutes) is a Technicolor film record of the first season on the ice of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition to Queen Maud Land 1949-52. It was produced for the Foreign Office.

London to Brighton in Four Minutes (4 minutes) is a breath-taking trick film produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation cameras for Television, and shows the complete journey from Victoria to Brighton by speeded-up photography.

Despite the very foggy evening about 80 Fellows and their friends attended the first Film Evening on December 5th. *The Undefeated* and *A Case for Handling* were introduced by their Directors, Mr. Paul Dickson and Mr. Peter Plaskitt respectively.

R. D. I. RECEPTION

The third annual Reception of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry was held at the Society's House on Monday, 15th December. The reception was attended by members of the Faculty and their wives, and guests, and members of the Council of the Society and of the Joint Committee.

100 YEARS OF THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

A paper by

SIR LEIGH ASHTON, F.S.A.

*Director and Secretary of the Museum, read on
Wednesday, 19th November, 1952, with Sir Harold
Claughton, C.B.E., Secretary of the Standing
Commission on Museums and Galleries, in the Chair*

THE CHAIRMAN: My first pleasurable duty is to introduce Sir Leigh Ashton, the Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, to whom you are going to listen this afternoon. Probably it is a mere formality to introduce him in the case of most of you. But there is always a chance that there may be one or two who have not met him; and as we are going to have a short discussion after his lecture, if there is time, I think it would be a thousand pities if those one or two were left in the position so poignantly described by W. S. Gilbert when he said:

*They couldn't chat together,
They'd not been introduced.*

Sir Leigh has been Director of the Victoria & Albert since 1945; and during that period, as all who were fortunate enough to listen to the broadcast last night—if they listened “between the lines”—will realize, he has brought to the Victoria & Albert what I might describe as a galvanic influence upon its work and development; at the lowest, not even the most captious critic could say that there was any rust about the place. As a matter of fact, he and his splendid team have done immensely more than that during this period.

With this brief introduction, I shall ask Sir Leigh if he will read us his paper.

The following paper was then read:

THE PAPER

I am very pleased to be speaking to you to-day, because the Royal Society of Arts was the body which initiated the 1851 Exhibition, and, as a result of that, we of the Victoria & Albert owe our existence to it. My subject this afternoon is the Centenary of the Victoria & Albert Museum, because the Museum of Manufactures, its real ancestor, opened on 6th September, 1852, at Marlborough House; the South Kensington Museum itself was not founded in South Kensington till 1857, and the foundation stone of the present building was only laid in 1899.

In 1835 a Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures was appointed by Parliament “to enquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts, and of the principles of design among the people (especially the manufacturing population) of the Country.” One of the Committee’s recommendations was “that the opening of public galleries for the people should, as much as

possible, be encouraged." Another quotation shows how these early plans sought to link both fine and applied art with industrial production; "it equally imports us to encourage art in its loftier attributes; since it is admitted that the cultivation of the more exalted branches of design tends to advance the humblest pursuits of industry."

No art museum was formed at that time, but the Government School of Design, and local schools, were set up under the Board of Trade in 1837, following other recommendations by the Select Committee. The main School was opened in Somerset House. Here "the direct application of the arts to manufactures ought to be deemed an essential element." It was later named the National Art Training School, and became the present-day Royal College of Art.

A miscellaneous collection of art objects and casts began to accumulate at Somerset House, and some of them were sent on tour to provincial art schools. But still no attempt was made to organize a museum.

In 1851 the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations was held in Hyde Park, in which the applied arts played a most important part. In 1852 the Government established the Department of Practical Art (changed in 1853 to "Science and Art") under the Board of Trade. This body was to administer the existing art schools and to establish "museums, by which all classes might be induced to investigate those common principles of taste which may be traced in the works of excellence of all ages." The Great Exhibition provided "an opportunity of making an effectual beginning." The Treasury agreed to £5,000 being spent on buying, from the Exhibition, objects of applied art to be "selected without reference to styles, but entirely for the excellence of their art or workmanship." These formed a nucleus of modern products around which both historic and contemporary works could be assembled. The prime movers in the setting up of the museum were the Prince Consort and Mr. (later Sir) Henry Cole, the latter being in overall control until his retirement in 1873.* It is hard to over-emphasize the influence on the museum of these two remarkable men. Together they had been the mainspring of the Great Exhibition and now they set themselves to create a cultural centre unique in Europe. The Prince was the enthusiastic initiator and lent inspiration to the scheme, and Cole was the indefatigable organizer and administrator. The museum library possesses a charming tribute to the Prince by Queen Victoria. It is in the form of a holograph inscription in a volume entitled *The Early Years of H.R.H. the Prince Consort*, and reads: "Presented to the South Kensington Museum, which owes its existence to the Great and Good Prince, by His sorrowing widow, Victoria R."

The Museum of Manufactures, the true ancestor of the "V. & A.", was opened on the first floor of Marlborough House on 6th September, 1852. It included the objects bought from the Great Exhibition and the collections from the

*He was responsible for the general conduct of the Museum, first as Joint Secretary of the Science and Arts Department (from 1853), then as sole Secretary from 1858 until his retirement in 1873.

Government School of Design. The museum soon expanded with new purchases and loans from private collections. The basic arrangement was by material—textiles, metalwork, ceramics, woodworks, etc. The authorities at first had in mind both "the improvement of public taste in Design" and "the application of fine art to objects of utility." As if to reflect these ideas, the title of the museum was soon changed to the "Art Museum," and then to the "Museum of Ornamental Art." A further and far reaching idea was soon added to the original aims; this was the selection, description and preservation for their own sake of the finest products of artistic craftsmanship. The objects were classified under the following groups: 1. Woven; 2. Metal; 3. Ceramic or Pottery; 4. Glass; 5. Furniture; 6. Various.

How this came about may be found in the letters of Sir Henry Cole—that renowned personality of museum history. "Mr. Phillips of the Office of Works saw no objection to using Marlborough House, and at the advice of Prince Albert, the Queen gave permission to use the Upper Floors. Colonel Phipps wrote to the Office of Works, and Mr. Phillips handed me the keys. I moved in with all speed"—a good Director. A curious section, which few museum directors would risk sponsoring to-day, was devoted to "False Principles of Design." How the public reacted to this was well shown in *Household Words* by its Editor, Charles Dickens—"A house full of horrors."

Mr. Crumpet, a gentleman residing at Clump Lodge, Brixton, had always been happy. Mrs. Crumpet remarked that "his cheerfulness was like a bird at tea." But Mr. Crumpet paid a visit to the Department of Practical Art in Marlborough House. "He acquired some correct principles of taste and became haunted by the most horrid shapes." "I could have cried," said Mr. Crumpet. "I was ashamed of the pattern of my own trousers, for I saw a piece of them hung up there as a horror." "I dared not pull out my pocket-handkerchief, lest I should be seen dabbing my forehead with a wreath of coral. When I went home the paper in my parlour contained four different kinds of birds of paradise, besides bridges and pagodas."

The question of the exhibition of false principles is always a difficult one as the museum formerly at Stuttgart used to show. Some of the horrors often seen there have since become fashionable; our present exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum shows equally that present taste may be often remote from its immediate ancestor.

During its brief stay at Marlborough House (until 1857) the museum flourished; such features as the Art Library, cheap catalogues, evening opening, and the circulation of original art objects and books to the provinces (started in 1855) bringing widespread popularity. Visitors in 1856 numbered over 111,000.

But what was most important was the immediate idea of "circulating to the provinces." On the first year's report the Board of Trade sanctioned the borrowing of articles and the purchase at half price of duplicate and superfluous material. "By these means the whole country is made to participate in the advantages and prosperity of the Central Museum and its benefits are not limited to residents in the Metropolis."

This wise and safe counsel of Cole—our greatest administrator—still continues, and in modern controversies it might be as well to remember that Cole's policy is still alive and as far as I am concerned still pursued to advantage in 1952. Last year we served 287 schools of art and training colleges, and 101 museums, art galleries and libraries.

The Circulation Collections, as in Cole's day, attempt to cover all the fields covered by the Victoria & Albert Museum itself, the only limiting factor being that the objects must, of course, be transportable. The wealth of the collections is obviously directly related to the richness of the main museum; thus the Circulation Collections of Elizabethan embroideries, Coptic woven fabrics, and Chinese pottery and porcelain (containing many important pieces from the Eumorfopoulos collection), rank among the two or three most important collections in the country, while large and representative collections have also been built up in such fields as Early English water-colours, English pottery, Persian pottery, and Japanese prints.

The special requirements of art schools have naturally led to an emphasis on contemporary work, with the result that the Circulation Department's contemporary collections are now much more extensive than those of the main museum. The collection of contemporary textiles is the largest and most representative in the country, while the collections of contemporary ceramics and prints are also among the most important.

In addition to its own permanent collections, the department has custody of material transferred from other national museums and made available for loan to the provinces. In particular, important collections of Greek pottery, Roman glass, British prehistoric pottery, and British medieval pottery have been lent to the department by the Trustees of the British Museum.

The Circulation Department assists provincial museums and art galleries in three ways: by providing travelling exhibitions, by making long loans of individual objects to fill gaps in provincial collections, and by making grants towards the purchase of objects by provincial institutions.

The travelling exhibitions are available to any provincial museum or art gallery that can provide adequate and secure exhibition-space, even though its own collections may be unrelated to the fields which they cover. In addition, public libraries may borrow those exhibitions which relate to book-production and the graphic arts. No charge is made for the exhibitions, but the borrower pays half the cost of transport and the cost of insurance.

The travelling exhibitions fall into five categories. The first category, which contains the cream of the collections, consists of a small number of large exhibitions made up of both three-dimensional material displayed in show-cases, and flat material for wall-display. These exhibitions cover such general themes as "Gothic Art," "Islamic Art" and "The Decorative Arts of the Italian Renaissance." They include small sculpture, bronzes, ceramics and glass, textiles, silver, enamels, ivories, illuminated manuscripts and engravings. They are designed to be shown in the largest provincial galleries, for three months at a time. The second category consists of exhibitions made up entirely of three

dimensional material displayed in show-cases. These vary in size from small exhibitions such as "English Alabasters" (2 cases) to full-scale exhibitions such as "English Pottery and Porcelain" (7 cases). They also are shown for three months at a time. The third category consists of exhibitions made up entirely of framed original material for wall-display. These again vary in size from 30 to 200 frames, and cover such subjects as "Early English Water-colours," "The History of Lithography," "English Embroideries," and "Japanese Prints." They are shown for one or two months at a time. The fourth category consists of small photographic exhibitions made up on panels, and especially designed for small halls where the more valuable framed originals in the third category exhibitions would be inappropriate. The fifth category covers small displays each consisting of a collection of three-dimensional objects devoted to a single specialized theme, such as "Italian Maiolica" or "French Lace," and set out in a single show-case. These single-case collections are lent for twelve months at a time.

All these travelling exhibitions are sent out as complete self-contained units complete with posters, descriptive notes, and labels. The three-dimensional exhibitions, which are accompanied by collapsible show-cases and fittings, are sent by museum van in the charge of a skilled packer who assembles the exhibition; while the framed exhibitions and panel-displays travel by rail and are hung by the provincial museums' staff. The labelling of the exhibitions tends to be rather fuller than in the Victoria & Albert Museum itself, and in some cases the whole method of presentation is frankly didactic. Illustrated booklets or introductory leaflets have been prepared for sale with some of the exhibitions.

The total number of exhibitions in existence at any one time is usually between 100 and 125, but the total number of individual showings in a year may be as high as 400, divided among well over 100 borrowing institutions.

The department is also responsible under the Director's sanction for administering the Government's system for giving financial grants towards purchases by provincial museums. These grants, which usually vary between 30 and 50 per cent of the price, are available to assist the purchase of all types of museum objects (but not equipment) including not only paintings and objects of art, but also natural history, geological, ethnographical, and archaeological specimens. The total sum disbursed in grants each year amounts to about £1,000, and it is hoped will increase.

The material available for loan to art schools and teachers' training colleges consists of framed examples, which are mainly originals, and unframed mounted photographs and reproductions.

The framed material, amounting to over 10,000 examples, is divided into two categories. The first category consists of some 6,000 examples made up into sets of 18 frames each, which are lent to schools for a term at a time. Each set covers a specific theme, and the number of different themes amounts to over 150, covering between them almost the whole field of the fine and applied arts. Some sets are intended for direct use in technical instruction in the classroom, while others are designed to be enjoyed by the general body of the students.

The framed and unframed material is lent not only to almost every art school and teachers' training college in the country (amounting to 300 institutions) but also to service art departments, such as the art classes of permanent Army Education Centres. These include the various Army Education Centres in the British Zone of Germany.

The lantern-slide collection was started in a very modest way in 1898. Its original purpose was to meet the needs of lecturers in the museum itself, but it was soon made available to outside borrowers as well. At first the collection grew entirely haphazardly, and it was not till the museum was reorganized in 1909 that there was any question of it being systematically built up or properly catalogued. However, owing to the First World War, the issue of the catalogue was delayed till 1920, and even after that date the growth of the collection, although steady, continued to be unco-ordinated, and depended more on the needs of individual lecturers than on any preconceived plan. Despite this, the collection was used on a considerable scale, and during the inter-war years some 12,000 to 15,000 slides were borrowed each year.

This reorganization, which will take several years to complete, involves the systematic examination of all the 34,000 slides in the collection, the planned addition of some 5,000 slides each year up to a provisional target of 50,000, and the fitting-up of a new visitors' room for borrowers. The need for such a comprehensive reorganization is shown by the fact that during the first year following the post-war re-opening of the collection, over 40,000 slides were lent, or three times as many as in the immediate pre-war years. Moreover, the number continues to increase year by year.

All these expansions show how admirable the conception was. At the same time how I wish I could see the exhibitions that went out in a specially constructed railway truck in 1855 with 600 objects which were seen by 307,000 paying entrants, or the second and more grandiose "Circulating Museum" in 1861 for which 429,000 people in the Midlands paid to see 900 objects.

In 1857 the museum was moved to the present South Kensington site to become part of the great collective museum to be known as the "South Kensington Museum." This was part of the Prince Consort's far-sighted plans to set up a great cultural centre of museums and colleges on the land between Kensington Gore and Cromwell Road which had been bought for the purpose out of the profits of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Museum of Ornamental Art and the Art Library were therefore joined by collections of British paintings (including the newly presented Sheepshanks Collection); Sculpture and Engravings; Architectural Examples; Appliances for Scholastic Education; Materials for Building and Construction; Substances used for Food; Animal Products; Models of Patented Inventions; Reproductions by Means of Photography and Casting. The museum was opened by Queen Victoria on 22nd June, 1857.

The administration of the museum had already been changed. The Department of Science and Art, now to be responsible for such greatly increased collections, left the Board of Trade in 1856 and became part of the Education

Department. In 1899 the Department of Science and Art and the Education Department were merged in the newly constituted Board of Education. The Board became the Ministry in 1944.

The South Kensington Museum soon began outgrowing its galleries, and a haphazard building programme was followed until 1884. The North and South Courts were finished by 1862; the lecture theatre, old refreshment rooms and the galleries above, by 1868; the Cast Courts by 1872; the Art Library, and East and West Courts by 1884. Meanwhile the scientific and other collections had been moved either to the other side of Exhibition Road or elsewhere in London, leaving the fine and applied arts in the main building. The Bethnal Green Museum, a branch of the South Kensington Museum, had been opened in 1872. It consists of the rebuilt iron structure originally erected at South Kensington in 1856-57 and taken down in 1867. The man chiefly responsible for the building development, although many artists and designers were employed at different times on the interior, was Captain Francis Fowke, R.E., who was official architect and engineer from 1860, and superintendent of construction from 1862 until he died in 1865. Major-General H. Y. D. Scott, R.E., completed later parts of the building, sometimes from designs commenced by Fowke.

By the 1890's the fame and importance of the art collections had become world-wide. For nearly half a century, this conglomeration of exhibits was very popular with the Victorians, and the museum presented a picturesque and almost rustic appearance of trees and flowers to visitors approaching from the Underground Station or from Brompton Road. But the growth of the collections made new buildings essential, and in 1891 a competition was held for designs to cover the areas facing on to Exhibition Road and Cromwell Road. It was won by Mr. (later Sir) Aston Webb; but the foundation stone of the new buildings was not laid until 17th May, 1899. It was the last major ceremony performed by Queen Victoria, and she directed that the title of the museum be changed to "The Victoria & Albert Museum." On 26th June, 1909, King Edward VII opened the new buildings. In that year the "V. & A." became a purely art museum for the first time, the scientific collections being opened as the Science Museum.

The basic arrangement of the art collections from 1852 until 1945 was by materials and type of object; the names of the Departments came to be established as: Architecture and Sculpture; Ceramics; Engraving, Illustration and Design; Library and Book Production; Metalwork; Paintings; Textiles; and Woodwork. These Departments, with those of Circulation and Museum Extension Services, still determine the administrative and academic organization of the museum, though the main policy has altered to some degree.

Historically, at this point in my lecture, we are still concerned with our origins before the Commissioners had settled on their sites. Many of the relics of the 1851 Exhibition were still in existence and had to be exhibited; this took place at Gore House, the former home of Lady Blessington, and during the 1851 Exhibition a celebrated restaurant run by Soyer, the famous chef. Here an exhibition of students' work from the art schools, already associated, and quite rightly, with the work of the museums, were combined with the old nucleus,

and to this exhibition, Mulready, the celebrated painter, had lent his drawings of nudes. These are quite rare now, for Mulready was a painter primarily concerned with dressing people up. Eastlake and his colleagues were horrified by his nudes and on the opening day everyone was adjured to keep the Queen out. Her Majesty, with her usual sense, went into the room and seeing how good they were, sent for Prince Albert and the Princess Royal, saying "What Fine Works."

The rapid development of a museum of such an extensive nature was due, primarily, to a number of devoted officers, whose work must have stimulated interest in works of art in general, but also stimulated the interest in collecting. For it must be recorded that while the Museum was founded "to promote the extension of knowledge of the arts and the principles of design among the people," the success of its principles led to the acquisition of works of art for themselves and the extension of collecting in general; this became in the Victorian and Edwardian eras a chance for the enrichment of taste in a far wider degree than was before normal.

The purchase of selected portions of the Bernal collection for £20,000 in 1855 was a first step in this phase of the museum, though if Mr. Gladstone had not been such a curmudgeon the nation would have had the whole lot for £50,000 as offered, whereas it fetched £62,000 even in those days. But the entire Soulages collection was bought in 1860 by John Webb for £11,000, to whose Trust, still existing, we owe a valuable small income: the decision to purchase we owe entirely to Lord Salisbury, as had the Government not fallen, the decision would have rested with Lord Palmerston, whose well-known aversion to mediæval art was well expressed by his enquiry "What is the use of such rubbish to our manufactures?" It is curious to reflect that on the occasion of this remark Lord Palmerston was not looking at the mediæval section of the Soulages collection, but at maiolica.

This new importance of connoisseurship, of course, leads me on to the greatest of all the names in our history, except Henry Cole, namely, Sir Charles Robinson.

Of course there are other renowned Civil Servants like that great disciplinarian Sir Charles Morant and even the redoubtable Skinner, who I believe caught one of my colleagues, still living, cooking kidneys in the Library on Mafeking night, and scared the pants off him; but if it be suggested that anyone did more for the museum than Robinson, I am prepared to swear he does not exist. He may have worked in a time when it was comparatively easy to buy, but, my God, what he bought!

He was born in 1824 in my home town, Nottingham; he died in 1913. I once met him as a small boy; he was Headmaster of the School of Art at Hanley in the Potteries in 1852, he was Curator of the Museum of Ornamental Art by 1853, he organized the Circulating Train in 1855, he was Superintendent of the Art Collections (Marlborough House) in 1857.

In my view our collection of Italian sculpture is the finest in the world—that is to say, in one collection—and it is to Robinson we owe it in the main.

In 1860 Robinson bought 120 pieces and made the following important

statement: "The desirability of embracing every opportunity for the acquisition of specimens of sculpture especially such as seemed only to occur at this period in Italy has been kept steadily in view," and "I would try to urge the desirability of neglecting no occasion for the acquisition of the more important monuments of sculpture and the minor decorative arts; every day such works are becoming more and more difficult to procure."

Let us look at a few of the pieces of sculpture he bought in 1861, a year I have picked on entirely at random. What a haul!

When Sir Charles retired in 1901, after having founded with the Marquis d'Azeglio the celebrated Burlington Fine Arts Club, he had done more in his field for the nation's collections than anyone before or since.

During his day the museum had expanded and altered, as you have seen, and it was for his main successors, Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith and my predecessor, Sir Eric Maclagan, to review and censor its presentation as part of the newly-constituted Ministry of Education and to decide in what form it was best to adapt the museum. The enormous and rapid growth of fifty years needed digesting, but this did not mean that we stopped acquisitions. The emphasis lay, in my view, in those years on connoisseurship and collecting; it had shifted a considerable amount from the original conception in which the objects were primarily exhibited for design and taste value rather than for taste value only. Not that the desired result of improving the taste of the public and the design of manufactured goods had disappeared in any way, but, to use a modern expression, the slant had altered. In a contented and rich world the collector was considered at perhaps too high a value. At the same time, particularly in my predecessor's time, some outstanding things were acquired: the Eumorfopoulos collection; the Desiderio *Virgin and Child*; the Eashy Cross, the Byzantine roundel from Heiligenkreuz are a few examples of a catholic and discriminating taste.

I have not been long in the saddle, but I would wish to record the Bernini *Neptune*, the only Bernini group outside Italy, the selection from the Kelekian collection of Islamic pottery, much the finest in any museum, the collection of the Great Masters of Calligraphy, who founded the roots of typography and our first Houdon, the bust of Voltaire made for his devoted pupil the Marquise de Villette.

But I have had to take in hand the question of my building; we could not go on with this agglomeration in a building so ill-suited to housing such a vast collection. We have no lift from the ground floor, we are over-decorated, architecturally, we lack storage to an enormous degree. We are the most intractable building I have ever known. We had to consider the people who wish to learn about the general history of art and it seemed better to give them that history by a selection of masterpieces of all materials concentrated on the ground floor, where I hoped they would not suffer too much from that tiresome disease known as "museum fatigue", and at the same time preserve on the upper floors the vast riches of our collections divided on the existing selection by material, so that the expert or the glutton can sate his appetite or his desire at leisure. At the same time, with the able assistance of the Ministry of Works we have merely masked the outworn but

important architectural features of the museum and any successor of mine can uncover them if taste changes.

Our methods of display in the main collections aim at showing the object to its best advantage, while providing as much information as possible without interfering with the public's æsthetic approach to the object. For the point of a museum, after you have conserved the objects, made them available for the student and expert and showed them so that the man in the street may like them and understand them, is ultimately that it should be a centre of culture, pleasure and education, in fact a *Mουσείο*.

Times and taste change always and so does the attitude of the public and my staff, but, looking back over the hundred years of the museum's history I would like to end by focusing attention again on the collections. When one regards the thousands of superb objects we possess, and the further thousands of invaluable specimens in the Study Collections, one realizes the remarkable achievement of a century's scholarship and expertise. It reflects not only the high standards of taste and appreciation of three generations of museum officials, but the wisdom and generosity of large numbers of private collectors who have given or bequeathed their treasures to the nation.

DISCUSSION

THE CHAIRMAN: I should like to start the discussion by asking a question which interests me personally. The lecturer did just mention the history of art; this has been the subject of some acrimonious correspondence in *The Times* recently. What I should like him to explain to me is this. He possesses in his museum objects which represent the history of art over the period which it covers. Is that history elaborated at all by specially picked lecturers? Are there lecturers in the general system of the museum?

THE LECTURER: We have in the winter months a series of specially picked lectures, which are free, once a week. Of course, we have twice a day a guided tour. And then any school that wants to have a special party may come and ask, and we supply a lecturer. There is no course on the history of art as such, but the weekly lectures are on special subjects which usually cover a limited sphere. Last year they were on the 1851 Exhibition. This year we are concentrating on subjects to do with coronations and so forth.

MR. W. KENT: Could the lecturer tell us when it was first called the Victoria & Albert Museum?

THE LECTURER: I think in 1899; it was first called the Victoria & Albert when Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of the new building.

MR. H. J. BRAUNHOLTZ, C.B.E., M.A.: I should like to ask Sir Leigh Ashton, while congratulating him on the extraordinarily effective way in which he has created an entirely new setting for the collections, what materials have been used to do this; have they any permanent qualities as architecture or will they have to be renewed frequently? The reason I raise that point is that I think that in this particular case the only thing that could have been done was to have masked the background, as has been done. In the British Museum, where I work, we are slightly more fortunate perhaps in having architectural features to which nobody could very seriously object; they are at any rate very much more simple and less ornate. But

I think we still have to find the museum in which the architectural features are so well adapted as to form a perfect setting for the collections which have been put in them. It should be possible to solve that problem, provided the collections are of a somewhat homogeneous character; although in a big museum such as the Victoria & Albert, which has so many different classes of object, you cannot particularize your architectural features in advance because you do not quite know for what they are going to be used as background. Indeed I have heard it said that the Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm has solved the problem most successfully by using a military barracks, which has no architectural merit at all, except in being so completely nondescript that it can be adapted by the interior fittings to any kind of objects you wish to put into it.

I wonder whether the lecturer considers that the particular solution which he has arrived at should be the permanent one for that building, or whether he does not think that he ought to have an entirely new building which would be suitably monumental in itself; because one does feel that major works of art need a genuine architectural setting of a monumental character.

THE LECTURER: The point is a very cogent one. What I have done can be moved; I do not consider that what I have done is permanent, because I see quite clearly that in twenty years' time tastes will have changed again, and there will be all kinds of new processes which may make it possible to mask the building far better than we have been able to do it at present. We have done it in "semi-permanent" style. There are a certain number of walls of brick and plaster and so forth, but the brick structures are done in something which will certainly last for twenty years. They are not very expensive—you know what the limits of our budget are. But they should be able to be replaced or altered in any way one wishes.

Of course, it is a fact that we have got all these vast halls which are completely unsuitable for putting things in; they really ought to have roofs put in, but the span is far too large to put a false roof in without the most tremendous expenditure on steel. So we have to take temporary measures which must last for the next fifteen or twenty years, otherwise they would not have been worth taking at all.

The ideal for a museum is very difficult to think of. The best museum I know is in Teheran, where everything is so simple and so suited to the objects inside it that I am sure it is one of the best museums in the world. I like the Museum of Modern Art very much, because it not only caters for modern pictures but has a Japanese system of sliding walls and so on which makes it very easy to adapt a gallery for any particular need.

Of course one of the great difficulties about museums is that you may get a tremendous inrush of extremely important objects. I bought an enormous object the day before yesterday, and I have not the slightest idea what I am going to do with it. I have not thought about it yet; but I had to have it. I shall no doubt improvise a home for it somewhere. That is one of those things that are a perpetual cause of changes.

But as I say the present adaptation can easily be altered the moment that some new scheme is considered by my successors to be better.

MR. H. J. BRAUNHOLTZ: It seems that the perfect building cannot be designed until the collection is absolutely complete. As long as you are in a state of growth, you cannot prophesy in what direction it may develop. So you cannot prefabricate a perfectly appropriate building.

THE CHAIRMAN: I now come to my second pleasurable task, which is to express all our thanks to Sir Leigh. I need not say much, because I have sensed that all of you have been extraordinarily interested. But I do want to congratulate Sir Leigh on having, within the space of less than an hour, given us the bare bones of history for a hundred years, and so clothed those bones that every

moment of it was alive for us, quite apart from the pictures selected—incidentally, I congratulate whoever displayed the slides.

The vote of thanks to the Lecturer was carried with acclamation.

MR. GORDON RUSSELL, C.B.E., M.C., R.D.I. (Director, Council of Industrial Design): The Chairman of the Council of the Society told me how much he was looking forward to being present to-day to listen to Sir Leigh's lecture. Unfortunately, he has had to give evidence in court, and I am speaking in his stead.

I am sure that before we separate, you will wish to thank Sir Harold Claughton for the charming way in which he has taken the Chair to-day.

Sir Leigh made very clear the connection between the Royal Society of Arts, through the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Victoria & Albert Museum; and I think we shall all go away with a much clearer picture in our minds of the position of this great institution.

I think one of the great things about Sir Leigh is his interest not only in the historical things but in the things of to-day. He gave my Council an opportunity, and backed us up in every possible way, at the end of the war over the big exhibition of "Britain Can Make It"; and in my more irresponsible moments I argue with him as to whether the Victoria & Albert Museum put the Council of Industrial Design on the map, or the Council of Industrial Design showed Londoners where to find the Victoria & Albert Museum. We have never settled this one. But our gratitude goes out to Sir Leigh for the work he has done.

I should like very much to propose a vote of thanks to Sir Harold Claughton for taking the Chair.

The vote of thanks to the Chairman was carried with acclamation, and the meeting then ended.

GENERAL NOTES

DUTCH PAINTING AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

The exhibition of Dutch paintings at the Royal Academy, which remains open till March, contains a few pictures painted before 1500, a few painted in the sixteenth century, and six hundred painted after 1600. The earliest are two religious subjects. The first, *The Man of Sorrows*, ascribed to Geertgen tot Sint Jans, is an intolerably distressing concept where the blood streaming from the wounds and the flagellation make violent assault on our pity and arouse our horror. The second, *The Entombment*, ascribed to the *Virgo inter Virgines* Master, is more honourably emotive because the scene is tenderly and personally imagined and set down simply without sadistic taint. We know nothing of Geertgen except that he lived with and worked for the Brethren of St. John in Haarlem; his only authenticated pictures (two sides of an altar-wing, given by the Dutch to Charles I in 1635) belong to the Vienna Gallery. The identity of the *Virgo inter Virgines* Master is not known; the name was invented for the painter of a *Virgo inter Virgines* which belongs to the Amsterdam Museum; other pictures so labelled (including a magnificent triptych owned by the Bowes Museum and recently lent by them to Agnew's) are presumed by some to be the work of the same hand. We know more of the sixteenth century painters whose works are seen here. These include a *Self-portrait* by Marten van Heemskerck with the Colosseum included in the background as he spent some time in Rome; Heemskerck was a rich and successful artist but so obsessed with the fear of poverty that he always carried money sewn into his clothes; when he died in Haarlem in 1574 he left a property to provide annual dowries for couples to be married on his grave—a provision executed

till 1781. Joachim Uytewael (or Wytwael), represented by an *Adam and Eve* and another signed picture, was a delightful Mannerist who visited Italy and France and took back some of the elegance of the School of Fontainebleau when he returned to work in his native Utrecht.

The seventeenth century begins triumphantly with Frans Hals whose large *Banquet of the Officers of the Civic Guard of St. Adrian* is lent by the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem; painted in 1627, when he was still under fifty, this gay slap-up realist performance is especially welcome as the National Gallery has no Hals group-portrait of this type. In the brilliantly painted and fascinating head and shoulders of a half-smiling young woman, ascribed to Hals, and lent by Mr. George Wyndham, the light from the left casts shadows as sharp as a modern photographer's arc lamp; and the half smile is suggested by the light catching the muscle at the corner of the mouth. Pieter Codde, who finished one of Hals' finest militia groups, is seen here in two pictures; and there is a signed *Portrait of a Lady* by Bartholomeus van der Helst which reminds us that this portrait painter made a fortune when Hals and Rembrandt were both bankrupt.

The large Gallery III has a really memorable array of portraits by Rembrandt alternating with large landscapes by Albert Cuyp—an arrangement so excellent that the room looks more like a permanent gallery in a museum than a collection of loaned pieces. Here too we have Rembrandt's *St. Peter denying Christ* which dates from his last period and was acquired some twenty years ago from the Leningrad Hermitage for the Amsterdam Museum. This picture and some of the Rembrandt portraits and most of the Cuyp landscapes have evidently been lately cleaned which adds to their vitality. The same applies to some flat landscapes which used to be covered in brown soup and ascribed to Rembrandt and are now seen to be green-grey and signed by or ascribed to Philips Koninck. Other pictures formerly ascribed to Rembrandt are shown here ascribed to his associate Jan Lievens who was said by Huygens in 1631 to be Rembrandt's superior in "sublimity of invention and audacity in ideas and forms."

Elsewhere there are scores of pictures by the interior and genre painters familiar to all from the National Gallery examples. Adriaen van Ostade filters light through grimy windows on his stunted peasants; de Hooch shows comfortable gentry sipping cocktails on terraces with sunset skies behind them; and Jan Steen and Vermeer parade their technical perfection. Among the landscape painters, Van Goyen and Jacob and Salomon van Ruysdael are seen in some forty pieces; and we can follow Dutch sea-painting from Jan Porcellis, who produced two marines a week for twenty weeks for an Antwerp dealer in 1615, to Willem van der Velde the younger who died at Greenwich in 1707. Among the still life and flower pieces I preferred some sensitive works by Pieter Claesz, Nicholas Lachtropius, Simon Verelst and Coenraet Roepel to the brittle pink flowers, blue leaves and tendrils painted by the more famous De Heem and Van Huysum. I also enjoyed some skating scenes by the deaf-mute Hendrick Avercamp, whose circular *Winter Scene* in the National Gallery makes one of the jolliest of Christmas cards.

R. H. WILENSKI

POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION

The Shropshire and West Midland Agricultural Society is holding an open competition for a design to be adapted for posters, of varying sizes, to advertise its annual show which will be held in May. The design submitted should be in colour suitable for reproduction by the hand-drawn lithographic process in not more than three prints. A prize of twenty-five guineas will be given for the winning design and there will be three consolation prizes of three guineas each. Full particulars and an entry form may be obtained from the Secretary, Shropshire and West Midland Agricultural Society, 9, Talbot Chambers, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The last day for receiving entries will be 16th February, 1953.

CORRESPONDENCE

RESTORED FUNDAMENTALS

From L. E. C. HUGHES, B.Sc., Ph.D., A.M.I.E.E., 15, AVENUE HOUSE, ALLITSEN ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD, N.W.8.

In the middle of the report, on page 68 of the last issue of the *Journal*, of Dr. Richardson's paper on The Science of Musical Instruments, neither the Lecturer nor Mr. Knight was perfectly correct in the explanation of how the ear apparently supplies a modicum of fundamental in a complex tone when the fundamental is not physically present (as in the wood-wind instruments), because a physical explanation was not sought.

The mechanical parts of the middle-ear are not perfectly linear in their transmission of vibrations; consequently they introduce sum-and-difference tones in addition to those primarily applied to the outer-ear. Accordingly, if the applied tone contains any adjacent harmonics, the middle-ear generates the correct fundamental in any event, and applies it to the real sense organ, the inner-ear.

The point at issue can easily be verified by repeating the experiments of Dr. Harvey Fletcher with both closed and open diapason pipes of the same pitch, or "footage". The actual length of the latter is double the length of the former, and they produce complex tones with all harmonics present; the former produce tones with only odd harmonics. If in the tone of the former the fundamental is removed in an electrical reproducing system by a filter, the minimum difference tone has a frequency double that of the removed fundamental and the pitch must rise one octave. This does not happen in the open diapason pipe, which provides the most prominent and characteristic tones in English church organs.

This is also the explanation of Mr. Mayer's "quint", which is also a characteristic of the Baroque organ and will be sufficiently included in the organ of the Royal Festival Hall, so that early organ works can be played with speed and clarity.

The pre-war Midgley organ did compete with the Compton and both used electrostatic runners to generate the frequencies which are synthesized into musical complex tones; only one Midgley model was constructed, while there are hundreds of Compton Electones about. The problem of producing adequate sound-power from electronic musical instruments is purely economic, not technical.

NOTES ON BOOKS

WINDSOR CASTLE. By Sir Owen Morshead. Phaidon Press, 1951. 30s

For the Festival of Britain, the Phaidon Press and the King's Librarian produced last year a book which will long remain the standard work for the general reader concerning the most ancient and venerable of our Royal residences.

Sir Owen Morshead has drawn most happily upon his great knowledge and love of Windsor to produce an introduction and notes of the utmost clarity and skill, and these have been grafted to a series of admirable plates which combine excellent photography with a pleasant feeling for atmosphere and appropriate detail.

In his Foreword, Sir Owen pays tribute rightly to his great predecessor in the field of Windsor research, the late Sir William St. John Hope, whose two massive volumes published in 1913 will always remain the last word on much of the architectural history of the Castle. But this has not prevented Sir Owen himself from describing the gradual growth over nine centuries of this great mass of buildings with scholarship, wit, and attention to architectural detail, and historical anecdote.

His account of the Castle's growth is particularly valuable for the light it throws on the later developments in its evolution, for, as he shrewdly points out, St. John Hope, as a strict archaeologist, "... lost interest after 1700 and patience after 1800". Sir Owen's on the whole sympathetic treatment of the large share which Sir Jeffry Wyatville had in adapting the Castle to its present form under King George IV does something to dispel the unfavourable impression which much of Wyatville's work, both exterior and interior, must create on many sensitive visitors. One wonders how many readers of the present volume will be surprised to discover that the incomparable sight of the Castle from the high ground of the Great Park (well captured in plates I and XIII) owes its appearance almost entirely to Wyatville, including the present form of the Round Tower which must be firmly impressed on the mind's eye of every British subject.

Sir Owen is, however, equally informative and fascinating when dealing with the siting of the Windsor fortifications by the Conqueror in his all-round defence of London, or the gradual evolution of that last flower of English Gothic architecture, St. George's Chapel, the latter being illustrated by some of the most beautiful plates in the book.

So much information is indeed compressed into this introduction that it seems unfortunate that the publishers have not thought it fit to provide a ground plan of the Castle even as it is to-day. Architectural detail, particularly covering so long a period, and even when described as clearly as it is here, is impossible to follow without some form of diagram, and a plan, preferably shaded in order to show Windsor's gradual evolution from a medieval fortress to a modern royal palace, is the only serious lacuna in the book. The absence of an index and the tiresome placing of footnotes at the end of the text (a feature far too common in modern book production) are also points which could have been improved upon, particularly in view of the care which Sir Owen has taken to reveal the sources of his information.

Reference to the astonishing collection of works of art housed at Windsor has been almost entirely omitted from the present study which is of necessity mainly architectural in its approach; but readers with a knowledge of the interior of the Castle will appreciate particularly plates 44 to 49, which give some idea of the wealth of French eighteenth century furniture to be found in the State apartments; to be regretted perhaps is the absence of a plate showing the great assembly of paintings by Canaletto, the purchase of which is such a feature of the period covering the residence in the Castle of King George III, a figure for whom Sir Owen obviously has a special sympathy. Further, in the centenary year of the Great Exhibition and in a period when the Victorian style of decoration has been partially restored to favour, a plate might have been appropriate revealing the interior of the Albert Memorial Chapel which, according to the 1902 edition of Baedeker's Handbook to London "must be numbered amongst the finest works of its kind in the world".

ROBERT CECIL

GRAPHIS ANNUAL, 1952-53. Edited by Walter Herdeg and Charles Resner. Zurich, Amstutz & Herdeg, Graphis Press, 1952. 63s

Nobody having any acquaintance with *Graphis* could have heard unmoved that this autumn would see the publication of the first *Graphis Annual*. So much ready-made interest must have been worth a good deal to the publishers of what cannot be (and is not) a cheap book.

Does it live up to expectations? On the whole, extremely well. Its agreeable but not particularly outstanding dust jacket (on paper which tears if you touch it) surrounds a more serviceable but dullish binding, which in turn surrounds an international exhibition that positively sparkles and hums. There are 753 illustrations

in the book, of which 34 are in colour, and of not more than a dozen can it be said that they do not deserve inclusion. An encouraging sight.

What does *Graphis Annual* set out to do? To show everything that ought to be shown, as a sort of Autumn Honours List for a score or more of countries? Not so, since the Editors expressly exclude material which has already appeared in *Graphis*, and anybody acquainted with any one source of supply could certainly ask "Why this, and not that?" The Editors of *Graphis Annual* intend it, they say, as a pictorial reference book for designers, advertisers, advertising agents and printers—and if, by that, they mean a sort of magnificent crib, well, why not? All art derives from all other art consciously or unconsciously all the time, and the man who supplies the need with something really worth following does a great service.

The Editors take a broad view of their subject, including not only such obvious matters as posters and press advertisements, but such less obvious ones as Christmas cards, letterheads, menus, calendars, packs, book jackets, and record covers—and in this they are right, though the very fact that so much ground is covered indicates that the coverage will be thin in places. The layout of the pages and the arrangement of the three-language text and references are admirably clear, the reproductions are both good and large—and if it could be complained that the sectional introductions have little to say and say it clumsily, it could be argued in return that in a picture book the occasional pages of text are not meant for reading.

Now, here is an interesting thing . . . of all these 753 illustrations, which carry between them more sheer excitement, drama, verve, vitality, fascination and fun than any source other than advertising could hope to supply, *not one solitary one is of the kind popularly misdescribed as "selling"*. Not one. Is that an accident? If you are in any doubt on the matter, just close your eyes and conjure up for yourself the alternative—an Annual composed of nothing but "hard-sellers", with all the dullness, noisiness and poverty of ideas for which that term is an excuse, and you will see the difficulty at once . . . It just would not sell.

No, obviously Walter Herdeg and Charles Rosner (who I hope are now hard at work on Volume 2) could not really afford to be representative of advertising to-day. They have shown us the minority—and the moral thereof is plain.

C. D. NOTLEY

FROM THE JOURNAL OF 1852

VOLUME I. 17th December, 1852

From the introduction, under the heading Subjects for Premiums, to the second section of the annual Premium List, which was devoted to machinery

It has been said, in certain quarters, that a Society established for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, was stepping out of its appointed path in introducing machinery among its objects. The remark is more specious than forcible. There are unquestionably many very useful corporations dealing with special subjects, with whom it is neither desirable nor advisable to enter into competition. But, on the other hand, mechanical inventions have always, and still continue to occupy a large share of the attention of our members, who are drawn from every class, and are not confined to any particular clique, profession, or business. This composite character of the Society forms one of its highest recommendations. The more minutely the sciences and industrial pursuits are divided, the more dependent are they the one upon the other. The study of any branch to the neglect of all the rest is, therefore, not calculated to promote the advancement even of that branch.

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Some Meetings of Other Societies

THURS. 1 JAN. Engineering Inspection, Institution of, at The Royal Society of Arts, W.C.2. 6 p.m. E. G. Brisch: *Standardization and Inspection*.

FRI. 2 JAN. Mechanical Engineers, Institution of, Storey's Gate, S.W.1. 5.30 p.m. G. C. Adams: *Principles and Practice Governing Interchangeability and the Specification of Manufacturing Limits of Size as Influenced by Statistical Considerations*.

TUES. 6 JAN. British Architects, Royal Institute of, 60, Portland Place, W.1. 6 p.m. Peter Shephard: *Landscape and Architecture*.

Electrical Engineers, Institution of, Savoy Place, W.C.2. 5.30 p.m. D. Mc-Mullan: *An Improved Scanning Electron Microscope for Opaque Specimens*. Industrial Transport Association, at Caxton Hall, Westminster, 7 p.m. Irvine List: *Use and Abuse of Tyres*.

WED. 7 JAN. Kinematograph Society, British, at Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. 7.15 p.m. C. M. Hepworth: *Films and their Story*.

THURS. 8 JAN. Electrical Engineers, Institution of, Savoy Place, W.C.2. 4.30 p.m. Sir John Cockcroft: *Nuclear Reactors and Applications*.

FRI. 9 JAN. Mechanical Engineers, Institution of, Storey's Gate, S.W.1. 5.30 p.m. F. H. Towler and J. M. Towler: *Control Valves for Direct-hydraulic Presses*.

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